Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/32885632.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Fandom:	Marvel Cinematic Universe, Spider-Man (Tom Holland Movies)
Relationship:	Peter Parker & Tony Stark, Peter Parker & Steve Rogers, Peter Parker & Steve Rogers & Tony Stark, Steve Rogers/Tony Stark, Ned Leeds & Peter Parker
Character:	Peter Parker, Ned Leeds, Tony Stark, Steve Rogers
Additional Tags:	Stubborn Peter Parker, independent Peter Parker, Peter Parker is a Mess, Peter Parker is Trying His Best, Supportive Tony Stark, Supportive Steve Rogers, Peter Parker Calls Tony Stark "Dad", Peter Parker Calls Steve Rogers "Papa", Adopted Peter Parker, money insecurities, odd jobs, Mr. Delmar is a Good Guy, Peter Parker Has a Family, Ned Leeds is a Good Bro, Good Friend Ned Leeds, Protective Ned Leeds, Precious Peter Parker, Peter Parker Needs a Hug, Peter Parker Gets a Hug, asking for help is hard, Peter's Fathers Are There To Help
Series:	Part 2 of Second Chances
Stats:	Published: 2021-07-29 Completed: 2021-08-05 Chapters: 2/2 Words: 5985

$23.16

by happyaspie

Summary

Being the Stark-Rogers' adopted son was everything Peter Parker hoped it would be. He was safe, he was fed, he was comfortable and he had access to anything he could ever possibly need. The problem was that after taking care of himself for so long, asking for things was difficult. Asking for help with things was even more difficult. Meaning that when he suddenly remembering he still owed Ned money, he was determined to work for it.

> “We can give you the money, Champ. You don’t have to earn it,” Steve said with a genuine smile. He could appreciate the dedication but the kid had been through a lot. And even though things had improved significantly since the adoption, there were still days that it was clear how much Peter struggled with the concept of being taken care of. And Even though he understood the sentiment behind the request, it felt like a slippery slope. He was genuinely concerned that if he gave in and allowed the boy to work for the money he needed to pay back his friend, he would later argue he needed to work for other things as well. He wanted his son to understand they had his back, no matter what.

[Follow up to my Homeless Peter Parker AU, Distracted by a Dime]

Chapter 1

Christmas passed, and Peter brought in the New Year with Tony and Steve by his side. They'd stayed up late watching the ball drop both on the television and in the distance from the tower's uppermost balcony. Midnight had been a flurry of affection followed by the clinking glasses and talks of everything they had to look forward to in the coming months.

It wasn't until things had settled down and Peter was lying quietly in his bed that he'd even considered making any sort of resolution. That wasn't something that he'd ever done before but for some reason, the concept was nagging at him. With a sigh, he'd rolled onto his side and looked between the Lobot action figure that had been standing on his bedside table since he'd moved in and the brand new R2D2 and C3P0 action figures that his fathers had gotten him for Christmas. As he did so, memories from the last few months flowed through his head like running water, pressing him to make a decision. "Accepting help," he'd whispered to himself and resolved to spend the next year relearning how to ask for and receive assistance from others but mostly from his family.

It didn't take long for an opportunity to test his resolve to arise. A few days later he woke up early and wandered into the kitchen before anyone else was up, took some pre-packaged pancakes out of the freezer, and went to the pantry to get the syrup. It took him a moment to find it because it had been tucked away on the top shelf, which was annoying because that meant that he couldn't reach it. With a small huff, he took out the folding stool and attempted to climb up, but his footing was off making it tip beneath his feet. In a desperate attempt to steady himself, he grabbed ahold of the wire rack that was closest to his hand but as he continued to stumble backward his hand held fast onto the shelf, causing it, along with everything on it, to come crashing to the floor.

Startled not only by the unexpected fall but the noise that came along with it, Peter instinctually curled into a ball, gritted his teeth and covered his ears. For several seconds after, he lay there and tried to force his breathing to even out while trying to decide if he would be able to get the mess cleaned up before his parents woke up but of course, it wasn't going to be that easy. He could already hear two sets of feet scrambling down the stairs.

"Peter! Are you okay?" Steve asked as he skidded past his husband and into the kitchen to where his kid was still half-laying in the middle of the floor, wide-eyed and shocked.

"I'm okay I'm fine-" Peter replied, scrambling to sit up as he surveyed the mess that he'd made. Food Packages were everywhere, a small bag of sugar had practically exploded, sending the fine grains in every direction and the syrup he'd been trying to retrieve was pooling near his feet. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry-"

Tony, having finally entered the kitchen himself, knelt down in front of his son and placed a gentle hand between his shoulder blades. "It's okay, Buddy. Are you sure you're alright?" he asked with

concern. “You’re not hurt, are you?”

With adrenaline still coursing through his veins, Peter took a quivering breath and swallowed with difficulty. “I’m not hurt. I can clean it up,” he promised and was just about to push himself up off of the floor when he felt a hand pressing on his shoulder.

“Let's take a minute to breathe first, okay, Kiddo?” Tony said and Peter acquiesced, slumping back against the wall and taking several slow, extended breaths.

“You good now?” Tony asked when the boy had reopened his eyes and no longer looked quite so tense.

“Yeah. I’m good. I promise,” Peter replied, taking one more deep breath to keep his nerves at bay.

Having been adequately assured that his son was, in fact, okay, Steve knelt down beside Tony so that he too was at Peter’s eye level. “What happened, Champ?” he gently inquired.

“I was trying to get the syrup off of the top shelf,” Peter reluctantly replied. “The stool flipped over and I grabbed the shelf when I started falling. I didn’t mean to break it. It just- happened,” he explained, looking between the concerned faces of his parents. “I'll clean it up and fix the shelf though, I promise.”

Tony helped the kid to his feet and then pointed towards the pantry. “There’s nothing to fix, Buddy. The racks are meant to slide out, so you can adjust the height. It’ll take two seconds to put it back in place and then we can start putting some things away,” he explained, already leaning back down to grab the shelf.

“I’ve got it, Dad,” Rapidly replied and nearly smacked his head against Tony’s in his rush to get his hands on the rack first. “I can do it.”

“I know you're more than capable, Pete,” Tony said, smiling softly between his son and his husband. “But Papa and I are going to help you anyway.”

‘Accepting help,’ Peter thought to himself before slowly nodding his head.

Once the pantry was put back together, Peter began putting things away while Tony swept and Steve went to obtain a mop. He had to bite his tongue to keep himself from repeatedly telling the two adults that he could handle the clean-up on his own. But in the end, he decided the assistance wasn't so bad and that maybe allowing himself to do it more often wouldn't be so hard.

It only took another couple of days to find out. Ned had invited him over for the day and typically he would just swing there. However, his suit was in the lab, slowly but surely, updating its self. And Tony wasn't likely to let him take it out until they had tested the settings. And that meant not only asking permission to go to his friend's house but also asking for a ride there and back. He considered putting the visit off, but Ned was excited to show him the video games he'd gotten for Christmas and, well, he was excited to see them.

He wasn't surprised when he received enthusiastic permission to go to see Ned. He always did. His parents were constantly urging him to do 'normal teenage things' and apparently going into the city just so that he could sit in his best friend's bedroom, playing video games, counted.

"I think once I add my Christmas money to the tin, I'll be up to at least one hundred dollars and if that's the case then that means we're practically there!" Ned said as he swapped one new game out for another. "Want to help me count it after we look at this?"

At the mention of the savings, Peter was abruptly reminded of the time he'd borrowed the tin and the money that was in it. But more so, he was reminded that he'd yet to repay the amount that he'd spent before returning what was left when he'd agreed to go live with the Stark-Rogers.' "Shit," he stated, dropping the control to tug at his hair instead. "Shit, I'm so sorry, Ned."

"Huh? What are you talking about Peter?" Ned asked, perplexed by his friend's sudden distress.

"The money! The money I borrowed when I was- when I needed it," Peter strained through gritted teeth. "I still own you twenty-three dollars and sixteen cents."

Ned visibly relaxed and shook his head. "You know you don't have to pay that back, right? I gave it to you because I wanted you to have it," he said and then turned his attention back to the television to set the game up for two players.

"I know, but I told you I would pay it back one day and-" Peter shot back without missing a beat

but his friend was quick to talk over him.

“-and I told you that it’s fine,” Ned insisted, subsequently dropping his own controller so that he could turn towards Peter. “I mean, I get it that you want to reimburse me one day but, Dude, it doesn’t have to be right this minute. You can just- buy me lunch one day after we’ve graduated from college or something,” he said because, honestly, he’d never genuinely wanted to have that money returned to him at all. Agreeing that the cash was a loan rather than a gift had been semantics. He’d known that his friend wouldn’t have accepted it under any other circumstances.

“But you’re so close to being able to afford that Lego set you want. And if I can get you your money back then that might be enough to do,” Peter pleadingly spoke.“It’s what, a hundred and thirty plus taxes, right? Why don’t we count the money now and go back to games after?”

Ned sighed and looked between his Peter and the tin that was sitting atop his dresser. “You know what? Let’s count it later,” he said, wishing that he’d never brought it up at all. But he’d not expected his friend to react that way and was eager to change the subject. “I’m kind of hungry, and I'm pretty sure we still have some pepperoni pizza rolls in the freezer.”

Peter reluctantly followed Ned into the kitchen and helped to gather up a few more snacks to add to the pile while the pizza rolls cooked. When the microwave dinged, he started towards the hall and was thrown off when it was suggested that they stay in the living room instead.

“I got a new movie for Christmas too. It’s some really old sci-fi flick that my uncle sent me. I’ve never seen it and thought maybe we could watch it together,” Ned said and Peter agreed but he was intelligent enough to know that his friend was simply trying to avoid any further discussions regarding the money he’d borrowed. That didn’t mean he was done thinking about it, though.

“Hey, Kid. You and Ned have fun today?” Tony asked at the end of the day when Peter had climbed into the front seat beside him.

“Yeah. It was a lot of fun,” Peter eagerly replied and it had been. Even after Ned’s deflection had left them abounding the new video games in favor of what turned out to be a pretty lame movie. He absolutely couldn't stop thinking about that twenty-three dollars and sixteen stupid cents. It was as if that one small debt was consuming him and he wouldn’t be able to think of anything else until he had it paid.

He knew he could ask Tony for the necessary money and that it would be given to him without a single question or a moment's hesitation. But it was nagging him that asking for cash to pay wasn't the same as accepting a new backpack or asking for a can of soda while they were out somewhere. Paying Ned back was his responsibility alone and not something he should need any help with. He knew his dad would never fully grasp that. However, it did enter his mind that his papa might.

"Hey, Papa?" Peter asked once Tony had disappeared down to the lab ahead of him. He was meant to be running upstairs to get a hoodie because he was cold but that had been an excuse more than anything else. What he really wanted was a couple of minutes alone with Steve. " Do you think I could do some extra chores or something before school starts back?" he nervously inquired. "I, uh, I owe Ned some money from- before and I want to pay him back so he can buy the Legos he's been saving up for."

"We can give you the money, Champ. You don't have to earn it," Steve said with a genuine smile. He could appreciate the dedication but the kid had been through a lot. And even though things had improved significantly since the adoption, there were still days that it was clear how much Peter struggled with the concept of being taken care of. And even though he understood the sentiment behind the request, but it felt like a slippery slope. He was genuinely concerned that if he gave in and allowed the boy to work for the money he needed to pay back his friend, he would later argue he needed to work for other things as well. He wanted his son to understand they had his back, no matter what.

"You share in the household responsibilities because you live here and are a part of the family. We don't expect you to do extra things to earn anything. If you need or want something, all you have to do is ask. And as long as it's reasonable we'll take care of it," Steve carefully explained, making a point of evading the boy's soft pleading eyes. "How much do you owe him?"

"I owe him twenty-three dollars and some change and I know I can ask you for stuff but this is different. This is my responsibility, and I need to earn it," Peter said all in one breath, feeling overly disappointed that the man hadn't seen it his way after all.

Steve looked at his son and clicked his tongue a few times in thought. "What about an allowance then, huh?" he asked. "My ma used to give me a little pocket money every now and then. I'm sure Dad would be thrilled to set you up with a bank account."

"I don't want a stupid allowance or a stupid-" Peter began shouting but snapped his jaw closed when Steve crossed his arms over his chest and gave him a warning look. "You know what? It's fine, Papa. Never mind," he stated once he was confident he could do so without getting himself into any trouble and then hurried towards the door mumbling,"Thanks anyway" over his shoulder.

Later that night, while lying in bed staring at the ceiling, Peter began to formulate a plan. He made

plenty of money in the past by doing chores around the neighborhood, and even though it had been months, he was sure the local shopkeepers would be just as willing to pay him for completing odd jobs as they had been in the past. All he had to do was to get to Queens and that would be easy. He'd tell his parents that he was going to Ned's house, as he often did and they would never question it. Then he could pay his friend back and be done with it. It was perfect. All he had to do was to pick a day.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Two days later, Peter's plan was going off without a hitch. Steve had dropped him off in the morning, and Tony was going to pick him up later in the afternoon. He'd tried to avoid the rides by pointing out that he could swing there and back since the Spider-suit was back online. But they had insisted and eventually he'd given in. It was fine, though. Once he got there, he hung out with Ned for a while before ducking out to squeeze in some patrol time. And that was a normal enough occurrence that his friend hadn't even batted an eye at the mistruth. He only felt a little guilty about that as he peeked at his watch and hurried towards the familiar bakery. "Hey, Savion!" he chirped as the little bell on the door jingled, announcing his entrance.

"Hi, Peter!" the shop owner smiled. "Haven't seen you in a while! Where've you been?"

"Oh," Peter replied, his smile faltering for only a second. After moving in with the Stark-Rogers' he'd eventually built up the courage to tell Mr. Delmar absolutely everything. He'd known the man since he was a little kid and with the fear of being sent away having been mitigated he'd felt compelled to open up. Savion, on the other hand, he'd only met a few months ago and he was having trouble deciding what to say. "My, uh- my living arrangements have changed a bit so I've not been around as much," he finally answered, "-but I'm here now and I was wondering if you have any chores for me to do."

Savion nodded his head and thumbed towards the back room. "Got a delivery this morning that needs to be organized. The shelves are all labeled but some of it's pretty heavy. Think you can handle that?" he asked.

"I'm stronger than I look, sir," Peter assured, biting his lip to keep his amused smile under control. He could lift a small car with one hand; he could definitely handle a few pounds of flour, but the man didn't need to know that.

"Well, go right ahead and be my guest," Savion said with a grateful smile. "I'll come check on you in a bit but don't hesitate to ask if you need some help lifting something," he said as Peter scurried past him towards the kitchen. "I don't want you getting hurt!"

Peter paused, just long enough to look over his shoulder and offer a quick mock salute. Then shouted, "I'll be fine, Savion!" and "Thank you!" before heading towards the palates that were still stacked up by the back door.

Putting everything away took barely an hour and soon he was walking out of the shop with a crisp ten-dollar bill in his pocket. ‘Thirteen-dollars and some change left to go,’ he thought to himself as he practically skipped down the sidewalk. But the enthusiasm faded when he rounded the corner, he came face to face with an obviously homeless young man. His clothes were inappropriate for the weather, and he was carrying an all too familiar overstuffed bag on his back. For a moment he paused, looked down at his new sneakers, and thought about the casserole that Steve would be making for dinner later that night.Then without any thought or hesitation, he gathered the money he’d just earned out of his pocket and placed it into the man’s hand before hurrying away to the familiar sandwich shop.

“I don’t have much today, Peter but if you want to pick up the trash and sweep out front I could give you five dollars,” Mr. Delmar said with a pleasant smile and Peter eagerly accepted the job. He started by collecting the random napkins, crushed cans, and wads of paper that lined the street in front of the little bodega, pitching it into the nearby trash can that no one felt compelled to use. Next he went to retrieve the broom from behind the counter, though he didn’t get much done before his phone began to buzz in his pocket. ”Hey, Dad, what’s up?” he answered promptly.

“You told me you were going to Ned’s house. Why aren’t you at Ned’s house?” Tony irritably asked in return. He’d texted the kid as he’d pulled up to the Leeds’ house so that he would know he was there. But several minutes later when he’d not received a response he’d gone to the door, only to find out that Peter wasn’t there at all.

“Why are you already at Ned’s house?” Peter asked, checking and rechecking his watch to make sure he was reading the correct time. “You’re not supposed to be there for half an hour.”

“There wasn’t any traffic,” Tony replied with a verbal shrug. “But seriously, Kid, the suit’s at home. Where are you?”

Peter hesitated for a second before deciding to go with a half-truth. “I went to go see Mr. Delmar and was going to be back at Ned’s house in time for you to pick me up. I wasn’t really planning on you showing up early,” he said, leaving out the part where he’d started at the bakery and that it wasn’t a social visit.

“Kid-” Tony said and then blew a deep breath out through his nose. “You know I don’t care if you want to wander around your old neighborhood but, in the future, a heads up would be appreciated. I’m on my way over there, now,” he said and then put the car into gear. He was just about to request that FRIDAY set him up with a route when his son started shouting in his ear.

“You don’t have to do that, Dad!” Peter said with more upset than he’d anticipated. He had to take a steady breath to calm himself back down. “I’m sorry. It’s just that- I can take the bus. I have my metro card and-”

“I’m already in Queens, Pete. I’m not going to drive home without you. Besides, Papa asked me to stop at the store and pick up some dessert on the way home and I figured you want to do the honors,” Tony said, pondering why on Earth his kid would suggest that he go home without him when he was already in the vicinity. But there was only one way to find out. “I’ll see you in five, Kiddo,” he said and then hung up before the boy had a chance to argue any further.

Before Peter had time to complete the job, he saw Tony walking towards him. His first instinct was to try to hide the broom behind his back, and he didn’t even know why. He wasn’t doing anything wrong. He just wanted to earn some money, and he didn’t understand why his parents were so against that. It wasn’t like it was unheard of for kid’s his age to have part-time jobs.

“What are you doing, kid?” Tony asked with an indiscernible shake of his head.

“Helping out,” Peter tentatively replied, tensely bringing the broom back around to his front and squeezing the handle so tightly that his knuckles turned white. “-But I’m just about done here-” he said, his voice trailing towards the end when he picked up on the sound of Mr. Delmar walking out of the bodega.

“Peter?” Mr. Delmar called out from the doorway. “Is that one of your fathers?”

Peter offered Tony a faint apologetic smile and turned towards the other man. “Uh- Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is- Tony,” he said, gesturing behind him.

Mr. Delmar smiled and spanned the distance between them, holding out a hand for Tony to take. “It’s nice to meet you, sir. Fine boy, you’ve got there. Good manners. Good work ethic,” he said, letting go of Tony's hand to pat Peter firmly on the shoulder. “Speaking of-” he added with a smile and then reached into his pocket. “Here are the five dollars that I promised you,”

“But I’m not done, Sir,” Peter said as Mr. Delmar tried to take the broom from his hand and replace it with the money. “I didn’t finish the job.”

“You’ve done more than enough, Peter,” the man said softly, tipping his head in Tony’s direction. “Go home and relax. Be a kid.”

Peter stopped resisting the exchange and slipped the money into his pocket but not without promising to come back and do the chore properly another time. Then he silently followed his

father back to where he'd parked down the street. He could practically feel the man thinking and was already dreading the conversation that he was sure was about to come.

"Kid, you know who I am, right?" Tony rhetorically inquired, once they were both seated in the car. "Yeah, hi. I'm Tony Stark- Majority shareholder of Stark Industries- Billionaire. Ringing any bells?" he further questioned, pausing for only a second to sufficiently encourage his son to look up at him. "Why are you out here peddling for cash when I can give you whatever it is you need?"

Not knowing what to say, Peter allowed his eyes to fall back to his lap where they had started. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to think but his mind was racing too quickly for him to form words, leaving to become a stuttering mess.

When no answers came, Tony decided to have mercy on the kid and reached across the center console to rest his hand on the boy's jittering knee. "-Papa told me that he offered you an allowance and that you turned him down," he said, chuckling a little when the teenager's head snapped up and his eyes tripled in size. "Don't look so shocked. We talk. Especially about you."

"I don't need an allowance," Peter rapidly spat out. The men gave him enough he didn't need them to give him money just for the sake of giving him money. Even knowing that Ned received a regular allowance wasn't enough to quiet his head on the matter. Their situation and expectations were different. "I know you and Papa would probably give me whatever I ask for- and then some," he said, the last part being more of an afterthought.

"Then what was that all about, hmm?" Tony asked gently. Neither he nor Steve had a clear understanding of what was going through Peter's head but he was determined to get his son to open up to him. "Talk to me, Buddy. What's going on?"

After some quiet contemplation, Peter licked his dry lips and looked at where his dad's hand was still resting on his knee. "I-I owe Ned some money," he vaguely responded.

"Yes. Papa told me that too. Said he offered to give it to you," Tony said, giving the kid a weak smile.

"Yeah, but- but this isn't like a pair of shoes or even an- I don't know, a video game system. This is my debt, and I need to earn the money to pay it off," Peter pressed and pleaded, feeling overwhelmingly frustrated that he was having to have this conversation again.

Tony sighed and shifted in his seat so that he could face his son fully. “Pete, you’ll have plenty of time to earn your money and pay off outstanding debts as an adult. Right now, you’re a kid. You're my kid, and I’m going to take care of it. All of it. The only things you have to earn right now are your grades at school,” he said calmly, hoping in vain that by keeping his own tone even, the kid might too.

Growling a little under his breath, Peter tugged at his hair and then ran his hands down his face. “It’s my debt, Dad. I need to do this by myself,” he forcefully reiterated, knowing but not caring that he was talking in circles.

“Kid, this isn’t- “ Tony shot back, stopping mid-thought to pinch the bridge of his nose. He could feel the ghost of a migraine trying to push through and just wanted to go home. “Why won’t you let me help you?” he asked through his teeth as he leaned his head back against the seat.

The words ‘*let me help you*’ rang through Peter’s head like a gong, causing his considerable frustration to momentarily stall. “I- I don’t know,” he said, blinking back in surprise for a second while his brain came back online. “It’s just that- it’s- I- Well, I borrowed that money so that I could run away. Shouldn’t I be responsible for paying it back?” he asked, feeling suddenly unsure of himself.

“Look, Pete,” Tony said, taking his son's nervous hand into his own. “This is the way I see it. You spent over a year living by yourself, taking care of yourself, and being responsible for everything that pertained to you. You’re Buddy back there, Mr. Lamar-.”

“-It’s Mr. Delmar, Dad” Peter mumbled in correction before he could stop himself but the man seemed to take it in a confident stride.

“Whatever,” Tony said with a flippant wave of his free hand. “He’s right. You’re a good kid with an ungodly amount of work ethic. I see it in your studies. I see it in your patrols. Hell, I see it around the house when I catch you picking things up and putting them away without ever being asked. You take on so much but you’re not alone anymore, Buddy. You don’t have to earn mine and Papa’s help. We offer it to you freely because you don’t have to earn help,” he stated, pausing long enough for his words to hopefully sink in.

“What Papa and I want is for you to focus on school. Focus on Spider-man if you must,” he said with a fleeting grin. “But most importantly, focus on being a kid. Go roller skating, play the drums in a garage band, or hang out at the mall and eat pretzels- whatever it is that kids do these days. But let me take care of the hard stuff. I’m going to give you the money to pay Ned back, and you’re going to relax about it. Capiche?”

“Okay,” Peter said after he’d allowed the man’s speech to wash over him and alleviate his tension.

“Okay?” Tony repeated in relief and reached up to tousle the boy’s hair. “That’s great, Kiddo. I’m proud of you.”

Peter wasn’t sure he’d really done anything to be proud of but he accepted the praise and tried to take solace in it. He knew that the man was right; he did take on a lot. But even so, he was grateful for the things that he’d been able to pass from his shoulders to those of his new family. But even with the marked reduction in personal responsibility, there were times when things began to add up and weigh him down. And it was during those times, that he tended to forget it was okay to share the load. That was something he would think about a lot over the next couple of days.

On Sunday before school was set to start back, Peter was curled up in his favorite chair when the front door swung open and Steve walked in lugging several bags of groceries. He automatically got up to help put things away, smiling when his papa thanked him for his help. Then as soon as the last bag had been unloaded, the man tossed him a package of gummy worms he'd purchased and beckoned him over to the couch.

“I stopped to get some cash while I was out. I wasn’t sure how much you owned Ned but you can keep the change,” Steve said, pulling a large bill out of his wallet and holding it out for his son to take.

“Papa, this is a one hundred dollar bill!” Peter squawked, nearly choking on the mouth full of gummies he had in his mouth. His eyes watered as he coughed but the moment he had them swallowed down he tried to thrust the money back towards his father. “I only owe Ned twenty-three dollars and some change! This is way too much.”

Steve smiled gently and nodded his head. He’d remembered how much the kid owned his friend. Of course, he had, but he and Tony had mutually decided to take the situation as an opportunity to hand the teenager some money of his own. Something he could have and spend it however he saw fit without having to ask. “Well, then it looks like you'll have a good bit of pocket money. Put it in your wallet and do what you like with it,” he said, half-expecting the teenager to bite back.

In an effort to keep his leg from jittering, Peter chewed on the inside of his mouth as he looked up at the man through his lashes. “I can do whatever I want with it?” he hesitantly asked.

“Of course. It’s your money. I mean, I would appreciate it if you didn’t do anything illegal with it but- I think we can trust you on that,” Steve said with a broad smile and teasing wink of his eye. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, Papa,” Peter said, thinking back to the young man he’d given the ten dollars to and all of the other men and women who were out there in similar situations, just waiting for a hand up. He was acutely aware of what that felt like and carrying around so much excess cash made him feel bad. Like he was holding out on them. “I was thinking that- what if- what if I decide that I just want to give it away,” he nearly whispered.

“Who are you planning on giving it to, Champ?” Steve asked with a curious tilt of his head. Though he had an inkling. He simply wanted to give the kid the opportunity to say it out loud.

Peter fidgeted for a few seconds before, once again, looking his Papa in the eye. “People?” he questioned more so than stated. “People like- like I was. People who need it.”

Having expected nothing less, Steve smiled. “You know what? Tonight during dinner, we’ll talk to Dad about what we can do to help you help more people like that,” he said, knowing Tony would do anything for their son. There were plenty of places they could volunteer or donate boatloads of money too. Or perhaps they could start an entirely new homeless initiative of their own. One that would make resources even more readily available to anyone who wanted or needed them. “If we worked together, then we could initiate something big, Something that could make a significant difference. But if giving away some of your own money makes you feel good. Then, by all means, do it. Just make sure to save some for yourself. Remember, Dad and I want you to go out and have fun with your friends,” he expanded because the kid had his heart in the right place.

Peter nodded his head and took a deep breath, letting muscles that he’d not realized he was tensing relax as he exhaled. The idea that his parents were going to help him help others was comforting in a way he’d never imagined and that had him wondering if maybe it would be okay for him to spend some of the money on himself. He pulled his knees up to his chest and rested his cheek there as he thought. The retro theater down the street from Ned was going to have a special run of the movie Blade Runner the next weekend, and he’d not been to a theater in a very long time.

“If-if we do that then-” Peter began, still wondering if what he was about to ask the man about was really okay, “-do you think it would be okay if I went to the movies with Ned next weekend?”

“I do,” Steve said with what he hoped was the exact amount of sincere conviction that his son needed to hear.

Peter nodded his head and even allowed himself to get a little bit excited about the idea. Ned would be thrilled. “I think- I think I’d like to do that then,” he decided out loud, smiling contentedly at the thought.

“Sounds like fun, Champ. I’ll drive you,” Steve happily replied because even though there was probably still a good bit that they would have to work on, his kid was one step closer to being fully settled into their home.

With a growing smile, Peter leaned in to hug his Papa firmly around the middle and bury his face in the man’s broad chest. “Thanks, Papa. You and Dad,” he whispered. “For everything.”

“You’re welcome,” Steve whispered back as he squeezed his son in a little more firmly and kissed the top of his head. “Just remember- we’re always here to help you” and sighed contentedly when the boy promptly agreed.

"Always."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I'll be visiting this little family at least once more for @sicktember! So be on the lookout for that!!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!